SCOUNDRELS & CO.

By COULSON KERNAHAN

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CHAPTER I.

I SEE A STRANGE SIGHT IN THE CABIN OF THE SEA SWALLOW.

It was getting dark when I arrived at Southend, whither I had journeyed to join a friend who was on board his yacht. I had unluckily missed the train by which I was expected, so there was no one to meet me at the station, but knowing that my friend's little craft was to be some few hundred yards off the pier-head, I made my way to the beach, and hailing a waterman who had just come ashore in his skiff, I asked him if he knew Mr. Arthur Duncan's yacht by sight.

"No, sir," he said. "I don't know Mr. Duncan, nor his boat. What's her name?"

"Ah! That I can't tell you," I replied. "I know she's a ten-tonner and a yawl, and that she was to be off the pier-head, but her name I don't know."

"That's all right, sir," said the man reassuringly. "She's there yet. The tide's just on the turn. If you'll jump in I can put you alongside o' her in twenty minutes."

He was as good as his word, but though as soon as we were within earshot of the yacht I hailed her with a lusty "Duncan, ahoy!" no one came on deck in response to my summons.

"I suppose my friend has gone ashore—perhaps to look for me—and has taken his skipper with him. He must have done so, because I see that the dinghy's gone. Never mind, I'll go aboard and wait for him." Saying which I scrambled from the skiff upon the yacht's deck, paid the waterman, and dismissed him.

As I had been up very late the night before, and the strong air of Southend had made me sleepy, I decided to go below and have a nap. My first idea was to make myself comfortable upon one of the cushioned lockers in the cabin, but, thinking to play a practical joke upon Duncan, I disposed myself, instead, in the empty space under the sleeping berth in the fo'castle, covering myself with some old tarpaulins which had been bundled there—I suppose to be out of the way. The cabin was curtained off from the fo'castle by heavy plush hangings, but I managed to arrange the tarpaulins and the hangings so that I should be able to see what took place when Duncan entered. That done, I settled myself for a sleep, from which I was aroused by the bumping of a boat against the yacht's side.

There was a scuffling sound, as of somebody clambering on board. A voice which I did not recognize said, "Here you are, boatman," and a gruff "Tank'ee, sir," was followed by, "Wish you good-night," as the boat was shoved off.

The dip of the oars had scarcely died away before another voice, which was unknown to me, hailed us from the water: "Sea Swallow, ahoy!"

"Sea Swallow, it is," said the man on deck, and soon a second boat grated against the yacht's side and put a passenger on board.

I was now beginning to feel rather uncomfortable. Should it turn out that the yacht on which I had so foolishly concealed myself was not my friend's craft, after all, I should look extremely silly when called on to account for my presence there. Hence I need scarcely say that I awaited the advent of the new-comers with considerable anxiety—anxiety which was not relieved by the fact that, instead of coming below, they remained on deck talking together in tones so low that I could not catch their words.

By-and-by one of the two said, "Here's another dinghy," and soon a third boat ran alongside of us, followed not long after by a fourth and fifth, which arrived simultaneously.

Then when a sixth, and finally a seventh, had put a passenger on board, a voice which I had not before heard, said:

"Come, gentlemen; let us get below." The tone in which the words were spoken seemed to imply a command rather than a request, and was certainly not that in which a host would address his guests.

But whatever might be the relations between the speaker and the rest of the company, the simultaneous shuffling of feet overhead told me that the proposal to adjourn to the cabin had received the assent of the meeting.

As the cabin was lighted by a swinging oil lamp, and the fo'castle, where I was concealed, was entirely in darkness, I ran very little risk of discovery; but all the same—when I heard the first step upon the companion ladder which led from the deck—I instinctively drew back my head under the tarpaulins, where I could neither see nor be seen.

After about half a minute I made bold to advance my head again, so as to get a sight of what was going on. And such a sight!

For the first moment I could not believe my eyes, but was persuaded that I was still sleeping. How else was I to account for the sight I saw, except by supposing that the whole business of the seven boats, each carrying a mysterious passenger, was a dream of which the present scene was a continuation.

Standing around the table were seven men, all so exactly alike that I should not have been surprised had I been told that I was looking at one man surrounded by six facsimiles of himself.

No one who had seen that sight, under such circumstances as I saw it, would have wondered that I could not believe the evidence of my senses, but lay there open-mouthed and scarce daring to breathe, my eyes journeying in a circle from face to face and from figure to figure, till I was dazed and drunken with imbecile astonishment.

All the seven were of swarthy complexion. All had bushy brown hair, with brown beards, trimmed in the same manner. All wore glasses, and all were dressed exactly alike in blue serge suits, with turn-down collars, blue and white spotted sailor scarfs, and black bowler hats of similar shape. While I was gaping at this singular spectacle, one of the seven took the seat at the head of the table with his back to me, motioning to the others to seat themselves, which they did, three on each side, leaving the space at the foot of the table unoccupied.

Then the chairman struck the table sharply with his open hand.

"Let the candidate for the seventh place on the council stand forward," he said.

For the space of three of four seconds nobody stirred. Then a man, who was sitting near the entrance to the cabin, shot to his feet as if taken by surprise, squared his shoulders, with his arms lying stiff at his side, and stood in the attitude which in the drillyard is known as "at attention." I could not see the face of the man at the head of the table, but I knew instinctively that the two eyes of him were covering the candidate, like twin guns in a battery screwed up to cover a target. Though his back was to me, I seemed in some way to feel the penetrating intentness of his eyes, and to share the discomposure which the object of his scrutiny was evidently experiencing. The military stiffness of the upstander's bearing seemed to ooze out of his fingertips. His shoulders contracted, and his head, which at first was well thrown back, came forward, and into his eyes stole a sheepish, furtive look which but ill became him.

All this was not lost upon the man at the head of the table. It seemed to me that his voice took on an added sharpness as, with the single word "There," he pointed with his pen to the foot of the table where the candidate would be facing the company. The man moved to the position indicated, and then the chairman addressed him in a hard, cold voice—

"You have come here as a candidate for the seventh place on the council? Is that so?"

"That is so," replied the other spiritlessly.

"I need not tell you that you have not been invited here to-night without due consideration as to your ability for the post you seek to fill. I may tell you too that you have been a 'marked man' for some months past. If I mistake not, you have suspected the position of affairs in regard to this council for a long time, and we decided that one of two things must happen—either that your undoubted ability must be enlisted on the side of the council, or else—well—that the council must be protected from any injury you have it in your power to do us. What the latter alternative would necessitate need not now, fortunately, be dwelt upon. You have, I believe, been sounded—carefully, of course—in regard to your readiness to undertake the responsibilities of the post. Am I right in supposing that you do not come here altogether ignorant of what these responsibilities mean?"

"I do not," said the candidate.

"You are aware that once having joined us there is no going back, and that for the man who plays us false there is only one penalty?"

The fellow nodded.

"Very good. And, on the other hand, you are probably not unaware that there are certain advantages accruing to a seat on the council which are not altogether to be despised?"

"I had surmised as much," said the candidate, almost insolently, and with a greedy glitter in his small eyes.

"Very good," with an inclination of the head. "Is it your will, brothers, that this man be elected to the council in place of Councillor Number Seven, whose name we have decided to remove?"

He looked inquiringly at his six colleagues, some of whom responded with "Yes," while others merely nodded assent.

"Very well. You are elected, and will be known henceforth as Councillor Number Seven. You may perhaps think, considering the importance to yourself, and to us, and to others, of the post you now occupy, that our ceremony of election is somewhat informal. But we are men, and in earnest: not children playing at being conspirators. Hence we go through no melodramatic form of 'initiation,' and exact from you no harrowing vow. We, who constitute the council, are united by the strongest of all bonds—self-interest. That is a bond which binds men more closely than any oath. Sit down, Councillor Number Seven. Now that you are one of us, it is right that you should be taken into our confidence to some extent. You are no doubt aware that most of us here are more or less officially connected with certain organizations and societies, some of which are secret, and some of which are not?"

"Quite aware," was the prompt response.

"All of which are of a political nature?"

"That I understand, too."

"Very well. Just now there is a big public that is in favor of agitation of every sort—of leagues, associations and unions—and we have practically got the management of such matters into our own hands. Then, as you know, there are some secret societies which are not ungenerously supported in this country and in America, and these, too, we may be said to control. In fact, if I may use such a term, we who constitute this council form a sort of syndicate for the taking over and carrying of everything in the way of agitation and revolt, from a secret society for the assassination of crowned heads and tyrants, down to an agitation against an unpopular landlord, a political meeting, or a strike. Do I make myself understood?"

"Perfectly."

"You have perhaps, however, surmised that, although we fully approve the patriotic and commendable sentiments which inspire so many thousands in England and America to subscribe their money for the carrying on of the work, we ourselves are not inclined to give our services entirely gratuitously?"

He paused and looked curiously at the new councillor, who nodded his entire consent and hearty approval of this statement of the case.

"In fact, you will not be surprised to learn that—like statesmen and patriots, who devote their time to the public service because they find that by

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doing so they can best forward their private interests; like clergymen and ministers, who so long as people are willing to pay for religion are quite ready to preach it; and, in short, like every one else who is not absolutely a fool—our first consideration, in the conduct of whatever business the public think fit to entrust to us, is, not to put too fine a point upon it, to feather our own nests. It is quite true that there are many men and women working in connection with these associations and societies who, there is no denying, are honest and disinterested; and very good decoy ducks they are too, to bring the money in. But such men and women, though they do not suspect it, are simply our tools. We are not, of course, such fools as to spoil our own game by killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. But in our case the game is a very easy one to play. If an attempt—successful or unsuccessful—upon the life of some hated monarch or unpopular statesman, the blowing up of a palace or prison, or similar demonstration, did not occur every now and then, our subscribers would begin to think that they were getting nothing for their money, and supplies would cease. But though much of the enormous power which is given to us by the complete control of all these societies, leagues, associations and unions is used by us for political purposes, we do not hesitate to use this same power in the interests of our own pockets. For instance, if we heard that large sums of money or other valuables were being conveyed from one place to another, or were secreted in any particular building, and we could avail ourselves of the power which we have at our control to secure that sum of money for ourselves, we should not hesitate about putting the machinery into motion. Do you remember the mysterious robbery at the duchess of Doncaster's?"

"Why, yes!" gasped Number Seven, for once genuinely surprised. "One hundred thousand pounds in jewels and hard cash disappeared, no one knew where."

"Precisely," said the chairman coolly. "They did not realize so much as that, however, although, owing to the fact that we have agents in most of the continental cities, we have exceptional facilities for the disposal of valuables.

"That now, as a case in point, could never have been negotiated successfully but for the intricate machinery which we have it in our power to set in motion. No ordinary 'conveyor'—if I may use the term—could have carried that bit of business through to a successful issue, even with the assistance of skillful confederates."

"And the proceeds of that haul, do I understand that they were divided among the seven councillors?" asked Councillor Number Seven, with glittering eyes.

"Precisely. It was a benefit performance. You are still desirous of assuming the—shall we say—responsibilities of councillorship?"

"Need you ask?"

"And when would you like to commence the duties?"

"This minute."

"Good. Well, as I have told you, we do not, when we elect a new member to the council, exact any solemn oath of secrecy from him. The rule—the invariable rule—which we have adopted in place of any such meaningless exaction is this. Whenever a new member is elected, that member has to qualify himself, so to speak, by carrying out personally the first 'removal' which may be decreed by the council. We do this as much for our own protection as for any other reason. The fact that a member is equally 'committed' with ourselves and has rendered himself liable to the same legal penalties, is the best guarantee of his loyalty that we could possibly have. Do you follow?"

"I follow," replied the new councillor, doggedly.

"Well, this is the situation. We recently elected to a place on the council—to the very place you now fill—a new member. He had taken life on more than one occasion, and we thought we were sure of our man, or we should not have invited him to join us. But we have since discovered—it is the one and only mistake of the sort we have made—that we have been misled in him. Not that he is not fully as eager to accept responsibility—even the most dangerous responsibility—as any of us. On that ground we have no cause for complaint. But the fact is that when he joined us he was under the impression that our motives were entirely disinterested and patriotic. The discovery that we were not altogether uninfluenced by personal considerations was a shock to him, and produced so great a revulsion of feeling that—as we have ascertained—he is in communication with the police, in order that he may serve the cause about which he is so infatuated by ridding it of the men—ourselves—who in his opinion are its betrayers and enemies. He is at this moment alone on board the little yacht which lies in a straight line a couple of hundred yards further out at sea than this vessel. At present the police know nothing of what he has to tell them. The matter has not gone far enough for that. All that he has done is to send word to a certain detective that he has an important communication to make. He has asked that detective—Detective Marten—to join him at 12 o'clock to-night on board the yacht to receive the communication. His reason for so doing is as follows: The council was to meet on board this yacht not to-night, but to-morrow night. The man who intends betraying us does not know that we are aware of his intended treachery and that we have altered our date of meeting. He thinks it is to-morrow that we are to assemble, and after he has made known our plans to the detective he will propose that our meeting be allowed to take place, and that then, when we are gathered together here like rats in a trap, the police shall surround the yacht and make the whole of us prisoners. It is a prettily enough arranged programme, but the poor fool has underrated our abilities and our resources for obtaining information."

"And where do I come in, in this business?" asked the newly appointed councillor nervously.

"Ah! you are business-like," replied the chairman, with a smile. "Listen. The detective is to join Councillor Number Seven, as we will continue for the present to call him, at midnight, on board the yacht I have told you of. It will be our business to see that he is prevented from getting there, and you may rely upon our doing it, for the resources at our command can accomplish anything. We are going to take you ashore with us in the dinghy when this meeting is concluded. There a skiff will be waiting for you, in which you will row out to pay a visit to Councillor Number Seven. In fact, you will go there impersonating his expected visitor Detective Marten. He has never seen Marten, and doesn't even know what he is like, which simplifies matters very much. You see this india-rubber ball, scarcely bigger than a marble? You will have no difficulty in concealing it in the palm of your left hand. You notice that there is a tiny tube or pipe to it? Well, Councillor Number Seven has a long story and a dry one to tell you, and from what I know of him, I can promise you that he will offer you refreshment, and will not want much pressing to join you himself. You must make some opportunity, when he is not looking, to pass your hand over his drink. As you do so, squeeze the ball, and if one drop of what it contains goes into the whisky, your business will be done. But even if you can't manage the business that way, you will have no difficulty in effecting his removal, for he has arranged to give the detective a berth for the night, and you can easily chloroform him when he is asleep. We'll supply you with the drug for the purpose."

"And what do I do with the body?" asked the new councillor. His face was now deadly pale, and his fingers were picking at the braid on his coat while he spoke.

"That too we have arranged," was the answer. "You see that brown leather hand-bag on the locker? Lift it. Rather heavy, isn't it? Let me show you what it contains. This weight attached to a chain is heavy enough to sink two men. When your business with Councillor Number Seven is transacted, you will slip the chain round his ankle, fasten it so, and drop the body overboard. Then haul up the anchor, row ashore, and leave the yacht to drift with the tide. She may go a long way out to sea, and the farther the better.

"On the first of next month the council meets again, when you will make your report. Put this letter in your pocket. It contains instructions as to where we meet and under what circumstances.

"And now about the disguise. You received, before you came here to-night, the clothes you are wearing, the false beard and the rest of it, with instructions in regard to 'getting up.'"

"Yes," said the recruit; "but I didn't know that all the seven were to be disguised alike, and it gave me a turn when I first came down in the cabin. It is the cleverest thing I ever saw, for behanged if the seven of us aren't as like as two peas. If we were all shuffled together like cards in a pack I don't believe I could pick out any one of us again to save my life. What's it for, and how do you know each other again?"

"We don't know each other again," was the calm reply. "No man here except myself, so far as I am aware, knows the name of any of his fellow-councillors. Why should they? There's no chance of my turning informer. If I turned Queen's evidence a thousand times over, it wouldn't save my neck. What there is against me is too bad and there is too much of it for that ever to be thought of. Hence we are known to each other only by a number. You are Number Seven and I am Number One, as I ought to be, for I originated the whole concern. Every man here has been invited to join us on my responsibility alone. I do the thing carefully, you must admit. In your own case, for instance, I knew what your suspicions were about the council and I had satisfied myself that it would be safe to make overtures to you, or else you would not have received the invitation in response to which you are here to-night. And yet you don't know who I am, nor whether you and I have ever met until to-night. Is that so?"

"It is."

The admission was made grudgingly and reluctantly. But, blended with something very like fear, there was in the way in which the words were spoken, the submission of one who recognizes his master.

"As for your inquiry, 'What's it for?'" went on the councillor who had called himself "Number One." "I should hardly have thought a man of your acumen would have needed to put the question. The facts about a concern of this sort can't be kept too close. Why should you put your head into a noose of which others hold the string? Don't you see it's safer for each individual councillor if his identity is kept a secret? This man whom you are replacing on the council—if he'd known who his fellow-councillors were, it is very possible that he'd have given all our names to the police and that each of us would have had two or three detectives on his track who would have arrested us separately. As it is, all he can tell them is that the whole of us meet here to-morrow night; but who we are and where we hang out, he can't say: so that it is only now and then, and for a few hours, that we run any danger. And I need hardly tell you that we didn't come here to-night until I had satisfied myself that no trap was being laid to take us, and that there was nothing stirring among the police beyond what I have already spoken of. Can't you see, too, what advantage this system of our all being disguised alike presents? You will have to put your beard and wig in your bag when you go to see Number Seven, because you go to him personating Marten. But you will resume the disguise when the business is done. Suppose you are seen coming ashore after accomplishing the job, and a description of you gets into the hands of the police. They will at once inquire at the two railway stations if a man answering your description has been seen, and they will be told 'Yes,' for the six of us will be leaving Southend—as far as possible by different routes or by different trains—and the police will be pelting all over the country after us, leaving the course almost clear to you. Don't you see how it scatters the scent? The police are at a disadvantage in fighting us. When we bring off any little job, they start, knowing nothing about it, and what they get to know they have to find out, which takes time; whereas we start knowing all about it, and with all our arrangements made beforehand. In fact, seven determined men with brains, all working together as we do, can snap their fingers at Scotland yard; and it seems to me that there is a big future for this syndicate as a business concern. What say you, Councillor Number Seven? Are you still as strong as ever on joining us?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Let's get to business. We'll go ashore now, gentlemen, and arrange for the new councillor, Number Seven here, to make his little call upon Councillor Number Seven that was."

He rose from his chair as he spoke, and led the way to the deck, the recruit following closely behind him with the bag. In a very few minutes the dip of their paddles had died away, and, cramped and chilled by my long vigil, I crept out from my hiding place into the now empty cabin, wondering how best I could go to work to frustrate the villainy of this precious Syndicate of Scoundrels.

CHAPTER II.

HOW I WARNED A DOOMED MAN OF HIS DANGER.

I was not long in making up my mind. Had I known anything of yachting, I should have set sail, hauled up the anchor, and made for the shore; but no First Lord of the Admiralty knows less about a boat than I did at that time. Row ashore I could not, as the rascals who had just left had taken the dinghy, and I did not like to call out for help, lest I should bring the same crew of scoundrels back to the yacht. Unless I made an effort to swim to the pier-head I should have to remain on board all night, and in the meantime murder was being done.

Without more ado I slipped off my clothes and dived into the water, striking out with all my strength. But it was not to be. The tide was now setting seaward at a great pace. Struggle as I would, I soon realized that it was impossible to reach the pier-head; so I ceased swimming and, turning on my back, I let the current drift me, feet foremost, towards the yacht which I had just left, paddling meanwhile with my hands, that I might keep my body on an even keel. As I neared the yacht I raised my head a little and squinted across my chest to my toes, to make sure that I should not be carried past her. In doing so I caught a glimpse of another small vessel that lay some quarter of a mile out to sea and in direct line of the current. It was no doubt the very boat on which the crime was to be committed. With the tide in my favor it would not be difficult to reach her, so I turned on my chest again, and passing under the yacht's counter, I struck out boldly for the farther craft.

By the time I reached her I was quite exhausted, and when some one jumped up suddenly and called out, "Is that you, inspector?" I thought it better to say "Yes," and to get on board as soon as possible, than to expend what little breath still remained in my body by entering upon what under any circumstances would be a difficult explanation.

"Well, I've always heard that you were a tricky one, Marten," said my new friend. "But I'll be hanged if this doesn't beat cock-fighting. Fancy your swimming all the way out so that no one should know where you were going to. I guess you're blown a bit, aren't you? We'll go below and have a drink, if you'll wait here a minute while I light the lamp."

My swim from one yacht to the other had been undertaken in such a hurry that I had no time in which to speculate upon the probable appearance of the person whom I had come there to warn; and I was therefore quite unprepared to find, when I joined him in the cabin, that he resembled in every way the seven mysterious beings whose extraordinary and uncanny likeness one to the other had so startled me an hour ago. Had I given the matter a moment's thought, I might have known that there was nothing strange in the fact that he was still wearing his disguise. But the events of the night had made me suspicious, and as I stood there staring at him I could not help asking myself, "What if I am too late? What if this is not the man who was marked out for murder, but the murderer himself? Why did he bid me wait while he went down to light the lamp? and why was he so long about it? Can it be that I surprised him at his devilish work, and that while I was waiting shivering on the deck he was putting the body out of sight and clearing away the evidence of his crime?"

While all of this was passing through my mind my companion had been staring back at me in a way which showed that he too was ill at ease.

"What's the matter, inspector?" he said, looking about him nervously. "Any one would think you had seen a ghost. The cold swim has affected you a bit, hasn't it? Help yourself to a whisky. That'll put life into you sooner than anything."

MOTIONLESS UPON THE TABLE.

He pushed first a spirit-decanter and then a water-bottle towards me with one hand, pointing with the other to a rack on my right, where some glasses were neatly arranged.

I poured off a liberal allowance, and tossed off the half of it at a gulp.

"Why shouldn't this child have a drink too?" my companion said, with a feeble pretense at jocularity, stretching a hand across my tumbler to get at the decanter.

There was nothing in the action to arouse suspicion under ordinary circumstances; but as I thought of the india-rubber ball, small enough to be concealed in the palm of the hand, and of the deadly poison it contained, a sudden panic seized me, and, scarcely knowing what I did, I snatched up my half-emptied tumbler and dashed its contents on the floor. The man sat staring at me with a look in his eyes that to my dying day I shall not forget. His mouth dropped open all awry, like that of a paralyzed man. His face went grey, his lips white, then screaming out, "You're not Inspector Marten at all! I knew it from the first. You are one of those infamous seven—one of those devils from hell—come here to prevent me handing you over to justice!" he sprang forward, mouthing and gibbering at me like a monkey, and with outstretched, twitching fingers pointed at my throat.

I was on my feet in an instant, more anxious to explain the mistake into which he had, not unnaturally, fallen than to defend myself. But neither course was necessary, for the next instant his arm dropped to his side, and with a great groan he fell forward motionless upon the table. Agitation had brought on syncope of the heart. The man whose life I had come there to save was dead.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

In the Slang of the Day.

The two dudes were wandering through the retail shopping district with eyes for everything feminine that came their way. In fact, their gaze proved annoying.

"They make me think of a shoe store," said the slangy girl.

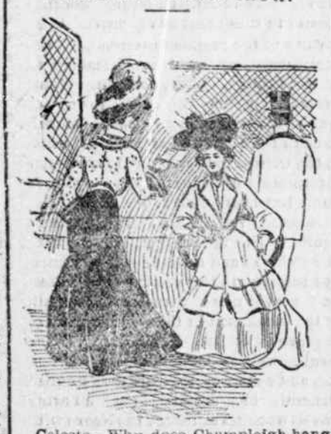
"Why?" asked her companion.

"A pair of rubbers," said the slangy girl.—Chicago Post.

The Unattainable.

Now what is human happiness?
Afar we contemplate it.
Its what some other fellow has
Who can't appreciate it.
—Washington Star.

HEARD AT THE DOG SHOW.



Celeste—Why does Chumpleigh hang around here so much?

Marie—He is considered an A1 judge of dogs.

Celeste—Wouldn't it be better to call him a K9 judge?—Boston Globe.

Trouble on the Big Road.

Met trouble on de big road.
He tell me: "Howdy-do?"
He ax me: "Whar you gwine?"
I tell him: "Fur t'um you."
He say: "I'll keep you comp'ny
De lonesome way en long."
But Mister Joy come down de road
En skeer him wid a song.
—Atlanta Constitution.

Her Only Comment.

"I'd have you know, madam," said the loud-voiced head of the combine, "that I am a self-made man."

"Well," rejoined the meek and lowly other half, "all I've got to say is there ought to be a law to prevent a man from cheating himself."—Chicago Daily News.

Positively Brutal.

"According to this paper," said Mrs. Naggs, "widows make the best wives."

"I don't doubt it, my dear," replied Naggs, "but nevertheless I don't feel justified in shuffling off at the present writing merely for the sake of making a good wife of you."—Chicago Daily News.

JEHOVAH-JIREH.

(Genesis 22:14)

How seemed it to the lad,
As down Moriah's slope they slowly went,
They who had glimpsed th' eternal plan of God?
Behind, the pressure of encircling cords,
The vision of a sacrificial knife,
And dying ashes upon altar-stones,
Before, a life that nevermore might be
The glad, free life of sunny-hearted youth—
For he had looked into the face of death.

How seemed it to the lad,
When at the mountain's base they ran to meet
And welcome back the chieftain and his son?
Marked they upon his brow a graver shade?
Within his eyes a stronger, clearer light,
As panoplied with power beyond his own?
And said they, under breath, from man to man,
The while they passed along the homeward way:
"The prince has seen—has seen and talked with God?"

How seemed it to the lad,
When for his mother's greeting low he knelt,
And felt her welcoming kiss upon his cheek?
Oh, did she see, with tender mother-sight,
A change had come? And think you that he told
The tale to her? Or did he hold it close
Too sacred for the common speech of earth,
While dimly seeing through the mists of years
In one great Sacrifice, the type fulfilled?
—Alice M. Guernsey, in Youth's Companion.

STRINGS THAT PULL.

"Our Tastes Are Strings Pulling Us Into Place"—Hence Duty of Cultivating Right Tastes.

There seem to be many misfits in this world, but after all, before lives are finished, most of them are seen to be fitted into their places, says the Philadelphia Young People. The thing which a man can do, and can do best, is generally that which is appointed him. If one has a passion or even a predilection for a certain thing, he will make or find a chance somehow to do what he longs to do, and will obtain a degree of proficiency in it. "Our tastes," says one, "are strings pulling us into place." The taste for books and music will pull one into the place of libraries, songs and sweet sounds, inevitably, invariably. There may not be complete gratification, nor perfect development of existing talent, but the taste that dominates the man and the circumstances. The strings pull, and with definite results. In spite of difficulties, Elihu Burritt's taste for books, pulls, even at the blacksmith's forge, and Abraham Lincoln lies at full length upon the cabin floor to read by the light of the flaming brands. Did not these men, and multitudes of others, find their places? Did not the strings pull?

Such notable and instinctive relish for the best things is God-given, and the bestowal is one of the means whereby the place is found. It is often far better to be thus pulled into place than to be born in it.

What is the duty then? It is twofold: Strengthen these strings that pull by cultivating to the utmost the taste for the best things, determined not to stop short of the right place for the exercise of it; and never be discouraged by obstacles which seem to hinder reaching the place toward which the soul is longing and the possibility of doing the best work.

HOW WORK REACTS.

Great Purposes and Great Efforts Never a Total Failure—A Truth Often Overlooked.

Work makes the workman. That truth is as certain and as important as that the workman makes his work. A man's manhood, his character, wisdom, skill, are largely developed by the things which he has done. A writer on sociological subjects says that the University of Oxford went to East London to convert East London, but East London converted the University of Oxford. He meant that, while the efforts of the Oxford settlements were not exceedingly manifest in results in London, they were very manifest in changes of thought and ideals at Oxford. The success or failure of good endeavors is relatively unimportant; they have accomplished a great purpose either way in the one who makes the endeavors. Often, when we fail in our work, God makes our work succeed with us. And how really unimportant is the prominence or the obscurity of our labors! How little it matters whether the work be done within the four walls of a home! So long as it is faithfully done, it will accomplish that purpose in us for which, very likely, it was sent. Work, then, for what you can do by your work, and also for what your work can do for you.—S. S. Times.

The Saloon a Corrupter.

The New York Wine and Spirit Gazette is quoted in one of its temperance exchanges—we do not have the felicity of seeing the paper in this office—as saying that the new excise law of New York could easily have been defeated if the liquor men of the state had only been live enough to take "cash money" to Albany and pay down for votes of legislators at the rate of $5,000 per legislator. It rails against its own friends because some "who probably thought themselves very smart fellows attempted to do business in the legislature on a promissory basis." It may be set down as one certain thing in the problem of political corruption in this country, that we will never get rid of it as long as the saloon exists.—Chicago Interior.

Chicago Confidences.

"I was married to that man once," said the first Chicago woman.

"To Mr. Marryat? The idea! Why, so was I," replied the other.

"You don't say? Were you before or after me?"—Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times.

The Charitable Sex.

"Miss De Bloom certainly has a beautiful complexion," said the man at the dancing school.

"Oh, yes," rejoined the kind-hearted girl; "but I'm afraid it won't wash."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Help.

Ferdy—I put in a good word for you, old chap. I told her you had more money than brains.

Algy—And what did she say then?

Ferdy—She asked me if you had any money.—Puck.